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RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC//J-3/J-5// PRIORITY
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SUBJECT: EU'S CT COORDINATOR GETS AN EARFUL IN ANKARA

Classified By: POL Counselor Daniel O'Grady, for reasons: 1.4 (b,d)

11. (C) Summary. The December 22-23 Ankara visit of EU Counterterrorism Coordinator Gilles de Kerchove allowed the Turks to detail their frustrations regarding the EU's handling of terrorist organizations targeting Turkey and laid the foundation for closer Turkey-EU cooperation, according to MFA and EU sources. De Kerchove listened carefully to EU concerns, suggested a second roundtable on extradition for EU and Turkish experts and promised to return to Turkey with additional concrete proposals. End summary.

12. (C) In separate January 9 readouts, MFA Department National Security Affairs Head Metin Ergin and European Commission political officer Serap Ocak provided their respective perceptions of the December 22-23 visit by EU Counterterrorism Coordinator Gilles de Kerchove. It was the first visit by de Kerchove, appointed by EU Council foreign policy chief Javier Solana in September 2007 to oversee EU counterterrorism efforts. As such, his role is that of a facilitator rather than an administrator. In Ankara, de Kerchove, a former Belgian Minister of Justice, met with MFA U/S Ertugrul Apakan, MFA Deputy U/S Ecvet Tezcan, Ministry of Justice U/S Ahmet Kahraman, Secretary General of the National Security Council Tahsin Burcuoglu, Special Envoy to Iraq Murat Ozcelik, Turkish National Police (TNP) Director General Oguz Koksall, and members of the Parliamentary EU Harmonization Committee.

Listening Mode

13. (C) De Kerchove's goal, both Ergin and Ocak agreed, was to show that the EU takes Turkey's concerns seriously by listening to what they had to say and to lay the groundwork for further cooperation. In all meetings, his interlocutors complained about perceived EU lack of enforcement against the PKK and the left-wing DHKP-C, often citing specific cases in which EU member states had failed to act against known terrorists, including those with Interpol red bulletins issued against them. Experts participating in the TNP meeting provided detailed statistics on EU member states' failures to act against terrorists targeting Turkey, including 91 who have been granted political asylum. All interlocutors urged closer EU-Turkey cooperation.

14. (C) While acknowledging Turkey's understandable primary concern with the PKK, De Kerchove urged the Turks to work more closely with the EU against the Al Qaeda threat, the MFA's Ergin related. The TNP, in turn, explained that Turkey has conscientiously shared relevant Al Qaeda-related information and intelligence with individual EU member states, but has depended on those states to share it with others. Lack of mutual trust among member states has hindered further sharing, he asserted. Turkey also requested closer cooperation with both EUROPOL and EUROJUST. In response, de Kerchove noted the EU would be conducting more analytic work on the PKK and suggested that Turkey participate. Details of such an arrangement, Ergin said, are to be worked out. De Kerchove separately observed that Turkish legislation on data protection, now pending in parliament, would facilitate closer information sharing with EUROPOL and EUROJUST, Ocak reported. (Note: According to contacts, this data protection legislation has been "in committee" for several years with no signs that it will move out for broader consideration anytime soon. End note)

15. (C) Responding to Turkey's expressed desire for closer Turkey-EU cooperation, Ocak continued, de Kerchove noted he had attended the highly successful June 2008 Istanbul extradition roundtable that brought together prosecutors and judges from Turkey, Iraq and select EU countries. He suggested that another similar roundtable might be held. (Note: Embassy Ankara's Resident Legal Advisor was instrumental in organizing this MOJ-hosted event. End note) He also promised to make this the first of many visits to Turkey and said next time he would return with "fresh ideas" for addressing Turkey's concerns. He separately expressed the EU's appreciation for Turkey's role as co-chair with Spain of the Alliance of Civilizations, describing it as very important in the fight against terrorism.

Comment

16. (C) As acknowledged by both Ergin and Ocak, de Kerchove has limited ability to "do" anything. His role as EU "coordinator" is to identify gaps in the EU's counterterrorism efforts and to bring proposed solutions to the attention of the relevant member states through Council mechanisms. While Turkey understands the limits of de Kerchove's authority, it hopes he will be able to use his prestige and powers of persuasion to facilitate changes that would strengthen EU member states' actions against the PKK, DHKP-C and other terrorist organizations targeting Turkey.

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Jeffrey